

# The NEW SAMSON

by  
E. Bland



WHILE he lived, no one suspected the truth. He lived in Fitzjohn's Avenue, in well-upholstered bourgeois splendour. He had a motor-car, a circle of well-to-do acquaintances, a large, competent, aquiline wife—a Miss Antrobus she was, I believe—one of the brewing Antrobuses. He had all the material things for which men sell their souls and wear out their bodies. He had a great reputation and an income greater still. He had also two things no one ever conceived it possible he should have—a romance and a secret.

He was a very popular man, kindly and generous, with a pleasant, if mediocre, wit, and a neat little talent for after-dinner oratory. A portly, well-kept man, with a prosperous presence and a genial laugh. The best of company, people said, and there were those who considered him good-looking, handsome even. Only afterwards it was remembered that his forehead had been too narrow, and those clear grey eyes of his too small and too near together.

Architecture was his profession, and he had the reputation of extreme thoroughness. "Sees to everything himself; protects your interests, don't you know. Contractors don't get much change out of *him*," his clients would purr, contentedly.

If I were to speak of him, not as Maskelyne, but by the name that was his own, you would recognize it at once as the name of the man who built some of the finest of our colossal new London things—

hotels, residential flats, business premises of vast new Universal Providers; and you would know his name for another, stranger reason. Anyhow, he was responsible for that palace of Sir Leo Montague Swimmonds's on the edge of the Sussex downs. And, at last, and beyond all, he was responsible for the Arena.

You remember the Arena, that vast, magnificent pile which dominated the whole of the West Central district, standing head and shoulders above the highest of its brick and marble brothers? There was a complimentary dinner on the night before it was opened, and Lord Goldschwein, who was on the board, proposed the health of our admirable architect.

The Arena, of all his achievements, was the one that seemed dearest to him. One would see him sometimes stand for a moment on the pavement opposite, gazing up at it with something of the frank, half-astonished pride of a child who has built a six-storeyed house of cards.

"Can *I* have done *that*?" he seemed to be asking himself.

His own drawing of its principal elevation hung framed in his library, the only architectural drawing on the walls of his house. He moved into offices on the ground floor of the fine block of buildings which nestled under the great wing of the Arena. But he never entered its doors or trod its beautiful staircases after the day on which the theatre was open to the public.

"I have to build the public what it wants," he used to say, "shops, or music-halls, or

Copyright, 1909, by E. Nesbit-Bland.

hotels; but that is no reason why I should go to the music-halls, or stay at the hotels, or buy anything at the shops. I live at home, and I go to the Queen's Hall, and I do my shopping at the Stores."

He said this in his gentle, genial way more than once. To Richard Panton, his head assistant, who at his death became his successor in the great business, he once said something further. They were walking over Hampstead Heath, and London lay below them in an orange haze. He said it quite abruptly.

"It's odd how things don't change. I used to walk here with a child once. And the Heath's just the same."

Panton said nothing. Something in the other man's voice asked for that.

"My little girl," said Maskelyne; "we used to climb trees, feed the ducks. I used to run races with her, in the morning, before business."

Again Panton said nothing.

"She was my only child," said Maskelyne, hitting at the gorse-bushes with his stick.

Panton had not known that Maskelyne had had a child at all.

"She was always laughing," the great architect went on, in a dull, toneless voice. "Such a pretty little thing, and so loving. She used to look out for me coming home, and run out into the road before they could stop her, and jump at me, arms and legs, clinging on like a kitten. And I lost her."

Then Panton said, "Is it long since she died, sir?" in a very respectfully sympathetic voice. And the great architect answered:—

"She didn't die; she left me. Never marry, Panton. Your children eat out your heart and live on it. And

when they grow up they leave you—empty, empty, empty. Never love anyone, Panton; it's not worth it. Did you get those details out for Worthington?" he said, and they talked business.

Now, it happened that Dick Panton did love someone—an orphan girl without a penny, of course—and he meant to marry her. So that the other man's warning fell on deaf ears. But he was sorry for the other man, too.

To his enlightenment Destiny added a further illumination. Panton was sent up from the office to fetch certain papers from the top drawer on the writing-table in the library of the house in Fitzjohn's Avenue. Spring-cleaning had covered everything with sheets and the carpets were up. Also a curtain, which he had always supposed covered a door, was taken down and a picture revealed—a beautiful young woman, sedately gowned, radiantly smiling. He looked at it while the housemaid disinterred the writing-table.

"Master's daughter, that is," said the housemaid, "by the first wife. Taking face, I always think, sir."

"Yes," said Panton, absently. He was curious, but he was not



"TAKING FACE, I ALWAYS THINK, SIR."

the kind of man who questions servants. So he said no more. The housemaid, however, read interrogation in his silence.

"Ran away with an actor chap," she said, quickly, and, before he could speak, added, "Not married, you know."

"I don't think," he said then, "that your master would like you to tell strangers such things."

"Lor', sir," she cheerfully rejoined, "*you* ain't no stranger. And, besides, everybody knows. She died the other day. Master and missus had a most awful row, and——"

He went out and waited in the hall.

These were the only hints he had of Mr. Maskelyne's secret. And when, on Mr. Maskelyne's death, a sealed packet was handed to him—a packet bearing on its face a date on which it was to be opened and the instructions contained therein carried out—he surmised that this might have to do with that part of Mr. Maskelyne's life where the lost daughter had been enshrined. He put the packet away in his pocket-book with a sigh for the dead man and a smile for the living woman—his own girl, whom he could now afford to marry. For Mr. Maskelyne, with unsuspected munificence, had left him ten thousand pounds and the business. The date of the marriage was fixed that night, and he went about his increased affairs, contentment in his heart and in his breast-pocket the dead man's letter.

He wondered a little in those first days what the instructions might be which he was to carry out. But afterwards, press of the great undertakings left to him by Mr. Maskelyne, and all the joyous preparations for a life with The Girl, drove the thing out of his mind. But when the flowery-white wedding was over, and over the rush of the train, and when he and she, alone in their private sitting-room at the Lord Warden, awaited dinner, her touch on a bulge in the breast of his coat and her question, "What's all that?" led him to pull out the letter-case.

"Your portrait among other things, Mrs. Panton," he said, and opened the case to show her her pictured face. With the picture came the packet—the sealed packet left to him by Mr. Maskelyne. He stared at it stupidly. "To be opened on the 28th of April," he read, and he turned it over to look at the unbroken seal.

"Why, you haven't opened it," said the bride. "Now I shall be able to see it! But, fancy having a letter like that unopened all day!"

"Curiously enough, I had other things to

think about," he said, caressing her hand. "I'll open it now."

"Aren't we to have even this day free from horrid business?" she asked, and added instantly: "We might as well have got married on a Friday."

"You wouldn't. You said Saturday was a lucky day."

"It doesn't seem to be! No," she said, and laughed gladly. "I didn't mean it. Of course, I'm dying of curiosity. Perhaps it's to say he's left you a lot more money."

"Mercenary woman! I shall not gratify your curiosity," he said, gaily, and opened the letter, shielding it from her eyes with his hand. She tried to take it from him, and for a moment he pretended to resist her. Then it seemed unnatural not to kiss her. Then he did open the letter. A little gilt key dropped out and fell upon the floor. He retrieved it, and she leaned against his shoulder to read the letter with him.

Abruptly he shook her off, and said, in a voice she had never heard:—

"Don't!"

"Oh, but I must!" she insisted; "good husbands have no secrets from their wives, you know."

"Don't," he said again; "I tell you this is serious."

"I'm serious too," she said, persisting.

"Be quiet," he told her very sternly. "Either the man was mad or—— No; don't look over. I'll tell you if it's necessary."

"What a nice beginning to a honeymoon!" she said. She bit her lip and hummed a tune, tapping her foot on the hearthrug.

"Oh, don't be a darling idiot!" he said, with impatient tenderness, and felt for her hand as he went on reading.

This was the letter:—

MY DEAR PANTON,—The Sunday papers have been full of the catastrophe which I have prepared so carefully. I thought when I prepared it that I could leave it as an anonymous legacy. But I find I cannot. I must and will have the credit of my achievement, the achievement which is the crown of my life's labours. Other men have built; no man has built as I have built. I rely on you to send to all the best papers the following statement:—

"The reason of the sudden and complete collapse of the Arena Theatre is given by its architect, the late Reginald Maskelyne, in a letter dated the day before his death. Mr. Maskelyne's life had been ruined and wrecked by one of the wretched mummers we call actors, and he determined to be revenged on mummers and on the fools who flock to see them. To this end and to no other he designed his masterpiece, the Arena.

"The completeness of the collapse will have been a mystery to all. You know that the great dome which covers the whole building is supported by a circular



girder of double H section, with spokes radiating to the centre on which the finial and the gilt orb rest. The least expert can see that if this girder gives way the roof will fall in and the walls be pressed out. This circular girder, supported on thirty-eight pillars, was constructed in four parts, and bolted together in the usual way.

"You know all this. What you do not know is now to come. At two opposite joints of the circular girder certain holes were drilled in accordance with my drawings. These holes were explained to the workmen as mistakes—unimportant, since they could not weaken the girders. But they were not mistakes; they were the heart of my design. My design was to destroy the Arena and all the people in it by one simple act. The inspector passed everything, and the holes, having been plugged with wood and painted over, were not seen.

"When the inspector had paid his last visit I went up alone one night to the narrow space between the girder and the outer casing. There I made certain preparations. For several successive nights I entered the building after the painters and decorators had left it, and by slow degrees, for it was awkward work and heavy work for one man, I did what I meant to do. I knocked the plugs out of the holes that had been called mistakes, and between the two plates forming the girder I fixed two hinged couplings capable of keeping the girder in place when I should have removed the bolts which, so far, held it. The couplings fixed, I unscrewed and removed the bolts which had hitherto held the girder together. The whole building now depended on my couplings, and each of these, owing to the leverage employed, could be knocked up and separated at one blow from a solenoid hammer fixed to the main girder. The whole of this arrangement was hidden between the girder plates and thus safe from observation. All four solenoids I connected in parallel and joined up to a clock which I had made and fixed in the basement. The wires, running in the thickness of the wall, were also safe from remark or accident. This clock is timed to run thirteen weeks. When the large weight of this clock falls to a certain point, it closes a switch. The connection being made, the solenoids are energized and the couplings loosed, and the smash, as reported in the Sunday papers, is inevitable. The clock itself is concealed in the basement, in one of those massive pillars whose solidity has earned so many compliments. The slab which covers it is only released when the bolt on the inside of the basement door is shot right home. An ingenious idea, which ensures against interruption when I am winding my clock. I wind it every three months. There is a door in the back of the cupboard in my office which leads into a cupboard in the basement of the theatre. The whole thing has been simplicity itself. The clock will run down at half-past ten on Saturday, the 27th of April, the couplings will be loosed, and my vengeance be complete. My only regret is that I shall not hear the crash of the falling masonry, not see the great cloud of dust go up from that doomed building, shall not hear the groans of the dying and the wails for the dead. This is my vengeance on life, and I should like to taste it to the full. My will was to perish with my building, as Samson perished with the temple of the Philistines at Gaza. But I am unfortunately cursed with unconquerable physical cowardice. I dare not face that. Yet the temple of folly will fall and Reginald Maskelyne be avenged."

That is what I want you to publish for me. People will say that I am mad, but that would not trouble

me even if I heard it. I believe that even in my grave I shall know of the fall of the Arena and be glad. It was only when my girl died that I learned the name of the man who betrayed her and sent her to death and destruction. That man is the manager of the Arena. He never knew that I knew. He knows now. I have neglected no precautions. The model works perfectly. I work it of a night when I cannot sleep.

Yours, R. MASKELYNE.

I enclose key of clock-case; you may like to hang it on your watch-chain as a memento.

The date of the letter had been altered five or six times.

Richard Panton read the letter through, and read it again. Then he held it out to his wife.

"Poor Maskelyne!" he said, pityingly. "He must have been quite mad and no one suspected it."

The bride read the letter, her pique drowned in pity. Her husband put in a word of explanation here and there.

"Oh, poor Mr. Maskelyne! Poor fellow!" she said. "How dreadfully sad! And nobody had the slightest idea he was mad."

"You see how he mixes up the paragraph for the paper with his letter to me. Changes from the third person to the first, and the tenses, past, present, and future. He must have been dreadfully unhinged. But what a devilish idea—so well worked out!"

"Perhaps he imagined the whole thing, about the daughter and everything," she suggested, hopefully.

"No," he said; "I have heard that from another source."

"Still, he must have been quite mad," she said, "because, of course, there hasn't been any accident at the Arena at all, and he says there has. So, of course——" her voice broke off suddenly. It was like a sudden silence when a running tap is turned off. And she held the letter in hands that trembled. And her eyes met his, strangely.

"What on earth's the matter?" he cried. "What is it, dear?"

"It says the *Sunday* papers. Tomorrow's *Sunday*."

"What does it matter what he says?" he said, impatiently, "The poor chap was off his head. What do his ravings matter? Put it away. I don't want to think of anything but *you*."

But she put out her hands to keep him from her. "Let me think," she said, and now it was his turn to hear a voice till then unheard by him. "Let me think. Yes—yes. I see. Suppose he *wasn't* mad? Suppose he really *has* set this horrible clock going? Don't you see? He timed it to happen on a Saturday.

He says the account of it will be in the Sunday papers. He meant it to happen on Saturday. Dearest, *this* is Saturday! Suppose it happens to-night!"

"It can't. He wasn't in the least that sort of man. It's all nonsense. But I'll wire, if you like, to the theatre."

"You can't wire all that."

"I'll telephone, then."

"You can't telephone the key. Oh, Dick, I believe it's all *true*! I'm certain it is. I don't believe he was mad in that way."

Her earnestness caught at him, awakened in him a dim uneasiness.

"But the thing's not possible," he said. "You don't know how public a thing building is—how every bit of work is inspected and sniffed into by the authorities. He can't have done it. Don't be a foolish darling. Here's dinner."

The perfect waiter had, indeed, entered, and was drawing back the chair for her. His subordinate stood, dish-laden. But "Send the man away," she said, quite out loud, and regardless of appearances. And when the waiters had gone, open-eyed, to whisper speculation in the corridor:—

"You must go back," she said, earnestly. "We must go back and see. All those people, and the people who love them. Dickie, we *must* go. I'm certain it's all true. We *must* go."

"If you insist on my leaving you on our wedding night," he said, ceremoniously, "of course I'll do it—if there's a train."

"Leave me?" she said. "You don't suppose I shall let you leave me? We'll both go. There must be a train."

But there was no train that would reach London in time to allow of their reaching the theatre before half-past ten.

"It's at half-past ten it was to happen," she said, when he came back with the news about the train. "Oh, Richard, I've been thinking! It's all quite clear to me. Isn't this the year that ought to be leap year and isn't? The century, you know. He must have reckoned on its being leap-year. He thought the twenty-seventh would be a Saturday; and, of course, it's a Friday."

"Well, then, dearest, do be calm. Don't you see that shows it's all nonsense? He said it was to happen on the twenty-seventh. If it was going to happen at all, it would have happened yesterday, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, if clocks went by the almanack. He timed his clock to go off to-day. He meant the thing to happen on the twenty-seventh, only Saturday's the twenty-eighth.

He timed it for Saturday; that's to-day. A motor would do it. Get a motor."

"Be reasonable. At least have dinner," he urged.

But she would not have dinner and she would not be reasonable. She insisted on a motor.

So he got a motor, and, once started for London, his mood changed. He took her in his arms, calling her the dearest, cleverest, foolishest, bravest. And now it was her turn to make light of the thing, and to own, with the sweet humility so delightful in our brides, that no doubt he knew best; but still—now wasn't there just the faintest, teeniest, weeniest chance that Mr. Maskelyne had really planned this awful thing? And suppose they *didn't* go and something *did* happen, how would they feel?

Thus they comforted each other.

But as the time went on the sense grew in them both of danger, of momentous issues hanging in the balance. It was after the puncture which delayed for ten minutes their rush through the night that this feeling of impending disaster settled on both, spreading above them cold, black, bat-like wings that were not again lifted.

The bride grew more and more silent. The bridegroom looked at his watch more and more frequently.

"There'll be plenty of time," he said, reassuring himself, "to clear the house and examine the basement. They can say an actor is ill, or something."

"Oh, yes, plenty of time," said she, with a start and a swift feverish cheerfulness.

But when the lights of Eltham flashed at them they knew there was not plenty of time. And it was as they crossed London Bridge that he broke the silence in which they were holding each other's cold hands.

"Dearest, there is no time for clearing the house or anything like that. With luck I may be just in time to stop the infernal clock. If not—well, I can't do anything else. Can I?"

"No," she said; "you can't do anything else."

You will observe that there was now no talk of Mr. Maskelyne's madness, of the possibility of the whole thing's being a maniac's vain imaginings. The long, dark rush through the quiet land had given that question the chance to settle itself for both of them.

The motor was tearing along the Embankment when the bride spoke again.

"We mustn't waste time," she said. "You

quite understand that I am coming with you to that cellar?"

He protested—vainly.

"There will be no time to argue when we get there," she told him quietly. "I've no one but you, Dick. I'm not going to send you where I won't go myself."

"Then I shall not go," he said.

"And if you don't go it will happen. All those people. Nothing can save them. We must go straight into your office and through the door he speaks of. You know the door?"

"I know the cupboard. The key is labelled. It is in his desk. But I can't let you. My love, my darling, you must let me go."

"I am not going to be separated from you," she said, strongly; "I am not going to be parted from you on our wedding night."

The motor had stopped at the theatre. She leaped out and ran along to his office door, her pale silks and laces sweeping the muddy pavement.

"Quick, quick!" she whispered, and he fumbled with the latch-key.

The lamps from the street showed the office ghostly. He switched on the electric lights, unlocked his desk.

"Go," he said; "I implore you to go. Go to Charing Cross in the motor and wait for me. I command you to go, Clara."

She laughed, took the key from his hand, opened the cupboard and the door within, and before he could stop her she had swung the inner door open and passed through it, turned on the switch by the door, and the circular vault with its eleven pillars was flooded with light.

It was then a quarter-past ten. He followed, and as he entered she swung the

door to behind them, and shot home its heavy bolt.

"Now, quick!" she said; "which pillar?"

There were eleven pillars, and all to the eye the same.

"Those other switches," she said, and felt at the surface of the nearest pillar with quick, fluttering finger-tips. He turned on the switches at the other side of the vault.

"Oh, go back, my darling, go back!" he cried, as the light flashed brighter.

"Try the next pillar," she urged; "feel for a hole that a key could go into."

But there was nothing. All the pillars were smooth to the touch as far as their hands could reach. Only the faint unevenness of the lines of cement between the stones. They went over each pillar, quite in vain.

"If it is true, then this is our last moment," he said suddenly; "kiss me, beloved."

He clasped her in his arms.

"Let us go," he breathed quickly. "We've done all we can. We can't do anything more. It's throwing our lives away. And we can't save them. Oh, come! It will happen now."

"Oh, hush!" she said, and tore herself from him; "be quiet—listen!"

She laid her ear to the nearest pillar; then to the next. And then she threw out her arm in a wild gesture that was, even in that awful hour, a gesture of triumph.

"I can hear it," she said, and then, "Is there *another* bolt to that door?"

He crossed to it.

"Yes," he said, and shot that other bolt home. He knew what it meant. The time had come for this devilish machine to do its work, if it was ever to do it. And the vast pile would fall, as the temple of Gaza had



"HE CLASPED HER IN HIS ARMS."





"HE CAUGHT THE WEIGHT, RAISING IT IN HIS HAND."

fallen on the Philistines, and of all the people in the great house he and his bride, buried beneath thousands of tons of *débris*, would have the least chance of escape or rescue. Yet he had shot home the bolt, and her eyes loved him for it, even as the lowest stone of the pillar against which she was leaning swung open slowly like a door, revealing smooth polished wood and a keyhole. He had had the little gold key ready in his hand all the while. He thrust it in. Would there be time? Big Ben chimed the half-hour. If the clockwork were accurate—and accuracy had been Mr. Maskelyne's most inseparable attribute—they had found the keyhole just too late. He tore the door open. There was the clock. As to that, at least, Maskelyne had written truth.

The long weight had already reached the  
Vol. xxxviii.—102.

switch, whose contact should establish the current and turn the enormous pile, Reginald Maskelyne's life-triumph, into the crashing engine of torment and death. He caught the weight, raising it in his hand.

Now, God be praised, the mechanism is simple. No key to pull this, to release that. A whirring sound of chains and cogs. A breathless agony of suspense.

"I've wound it up. All right, my darling. Oh, it's all right now! It's all right, I tell you. Hold up another moment. It's safe for months now."

She was drawing long breaths of agony, leaning against the pillar, clutching the stone door of the clock cavity with tense hands.

Then he had to drag, almost to carry her back to the street. He pushed her and her disordered silken draperies roughly into the motor-car.

"I'll be back directly," he said. "It's absolutely safe, I tell you. I *must* go and tell the manager—tell him to have the wires cut."

She tried to hold him, to follow him, but she fell back on the cushions. In the danger's face she had been bold as a tigress; now that the danger was past she was weak as a new-born kitten.

When he came back to her she was crying softly, and clutched at him as he entered the carriage.

"Queen's Hotel, Sydenham," he said; "we won't stay too near it. You'd dream of it all night."

"Did you tell him?" she asked, as they were whirled away.

"Oh, I told him. But the brute was half drunk. I think he thought *I* was. I dare say I look it. He wouldn't listen at first, and when I made him he hiccoughed out something about mare's nests and much obliged, of course, don't you know. Said he'd send his electrician to look into it on Monday."

"Did you tell him *all* about it?"

"Yes; as much as he'd listen to. Oh, my love, my brave girl! How can you love me at all? I wanted you to chuck it."

"You shot the second bolt," she said, and fainted in his arms.

The Arena audience streamed out into the yellow-lighted streets, chattering, laughing, discussing the evening's entertainment, praising the actor-manager—his cleverness, his enterprise. The hansoms and taxicabs lining the street dispersed with jinglings and puffings. The great doors were closed, the lights extinguished in box-office and corridors. In the theatre the attendants were busy covering the gay richness of velvet and gilding with sad-coloured cloths and draperies. The stage-door had let out the last of the performers, the dressers had finished their work of tidying and replacement. The porter waited impatiently for the manager to come out. At last he came, walking with the stiff, conscious exactness of a man not too drunk to know that it is wise to appear sober. He only lurched a little as he thrust his fur coat between two bright swing doors on the other side of the street, and his voice was hardly huskier than usual as he demanded Angostura and soda. He dropped a couple of tabloids into the long glass, drank, and sat down on the crimson plush seat with closed eyes.

"He'll be better in a minute," the barmaid said, in a whispered titter.

The freshness of the night air as he came

out into it had sent a flash of clear remembrance to his muddled brain. It died at once, but left behind it the certainty that someone had told him something, and that he must remember what it was. So he had lurched into the bar and taken the antidote.

He sat there for five minutes, a man who had been handsome, but now on his face were the lines and dents and puffings of unbridled selfishness and gross living. When his face was at rest they showed horribly.

Suddenly he stood up; he had remembered. A man had come and told him some tale about a clock working in the basement. Nonsense, perhaps, but worth investigating. He went to the telephone box and rang up the electrician.

"Come down to the Arena at once," he said. "You'll find me in the basement." Then he went back to the Arena, to let himself in with his private key.

As he passed through the swing-doors of the bar a woman in wretched rags, with a baby in her arms, held out a box of matches, and her arm brushed against his fur coat. He pushed her roughly away. The baby cried. And the actor-manager laughed. "What you get in the way for, then?" he asked.

He found the basement as those others had left it—those two who had fought there for the lives of others, their own lives in their hands. The doors swung to behind him as he turned up the electric light and stood alone among the pillars. In one of them a door stood open—he could see the clock inside. It was still going. He remembered enough of what that man had told him to know that it was the clock that was, somehow, the engine of destruction. He stared at it.

"You stop!" he said, thickly; "see?"

The clock ticked on, delicately accentuating the silence.

"You just wait," he said to the clock, and pulled out a gold cigar-case and lighted a fat cigar, and paced heavily up and down, awaiting the electrician.

But the electrician did not come. He lived at Brixton, and the trams were crowded that night. The clock ticked on.

"You be quiet," said the actor-manager. "Why didn't he stop clock? He knew. Silly cuckoo. Any fool can stop confounded clock."

He went forward, caught at the big weight, and dragged it out. But when he let it go it settled back into its place with a small, sharp clattering, and the clock ticked on. He did not like it. It was like someone laughing at him. "Tick, tick, tick, tick."



"You shut up—see?" he said, leaned forward, and dragged at the pendulum. It broke in his hand, and he lurched forward, his head struck against the pillar, and his left hand sought support and found it. He leaned all his weight on his left hand, and that left hand

thunder, and clad in thousands of tons of brick and iron and solid masonry.

It was a week before the housebreakers, working day and night at what was left of the Arena, came to what was left of the actor-manager.



"THEN DEATH CAME TO HIM VOICED WITH THUNDER."

rested on the switch designed to make the circuit, knock over the wedge, and bring down the building.

He staggered back—and as he did so a thunderous crash overhead told him what he had done. I think he was sober then. He dashed for the door—but the door had stuck. Then he thought of a girl who had loved him, and of a beggar woman and a baby that cried. Then death came to him voiced with

Thus the whole of that gigantic heaped-up vengeance did, in fact, fall on one sole being—fell on the man for whom it had been primarily designed. There was a certain wild poetic justice about the thing which appeared to the world when Panton made the facts known. It possibly appeared to the actor-manager himself in that brief instant between the crash and the coming of death. To him I think that instant was not brief.